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Country witnessed 34pc increase in terrorism in 2025

• Pak Institute for Peace Studies report counts 699 terrorist attacks in outgoing year • Burden of violence fell on security personnel, constituting over 42pc of fatalities

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Despite record militant deaths, Pakistan saw a sharp escalation in militant violence in 2025, with terrorist attacks rising by 34 per cent and terrorism-related fatalities increasing by 21 per cent year on year. As many as 699 terrorist attacks were recorded countrywide during the year.

This violence claimed at least 1,034 lives and left 1,366 injured, underscoring a rising trajectory of militancy that has persisted since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

These are the findings of the "Pakistan Security Report 2025," released by the Islamabad-based Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) on Thursday.

Besides rising border violence and militant resurgence, evolving militant tactics from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Balochistan fuel a widening security challenge, the report says. The burden of this violence fell disproportionately on the state's defenders as security and law-enforcement personnel suffered over 42pc of all terrorism-related fatalities, with 437 lives lost, the data shows.

The report notes that this stark figure highlights the frontline nature of the conflict and the relentless targeting of army, police and paramilitary forces. Civilians were also heavily affected, with 354 non-combatants losing their lives.

Meanwhile, 243 militants were killed, either in suicide attacks they carried out or during retaliatory fire by security forces following some of the terrorist attacks. The PIPS report says that the conflict remained intensely regionalised, with over 95pc of attacks concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan.

In KP, a 40pc rise in incidents illustrated the entrenched presence of groups like the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates. The province experienced the highest number of terrorist incidents in the country in 2025, with 413 attacks. These violent incidents claimed a total of 581 lives and left 698 others injured.

The province faced not just more frequent attacks, but more complex ones, including a coordinated wave of assaults across 11 districts on Independence Day — a symbolic challenge to state authority, the report says. In Balochistan, the insurgency evolved qualitatively. The province experienced 254 militant attacks in 2025, resulting in 419 deaths and injuries to 607 others. A 26pc increase in attacks was accompanied by a shift towards high-impact, coordinated operations.

Militant groups like the proscribed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) moved beyond hit-and-run tactics to execute highway blockades, sieges, and hijackings, directly targeting economic infrastructure and state symbols to amplify their political message and disrupt governance.

Sindh province recorded 21 terrorist attacks, including 16 in Karachi, two in Shikarpur, and one each in Hyderabad, Jacobabad, and Jamshoro. These incidents resulted in 14 fatalities and left 17 others injured. Punjab witnessed seven terrorist attacks in 2025, a decline from 11 incidents in the previous year.

These attacks killed five people including four militants and one policeman, and injured two policemen. A suicide blast outside the judicial complex housing the Islamabad district and sessions courts killed 12 people. Jamaatul Ahrar, a faction of the banned TTP, claimed the attack.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, three attacks were reported, including two in Diamir district and one in Gilgit. These incidents claimed the lives of three security personnel, including two Scouts and one Frontier Corps official, and injured six others.

ADEN: Supporters of the Southern Transitional Council wave flags during a rally.—Reuters

Separatists to let Saudi-backed govt forces into held areas

• STC says it will continue to operate in the seized regions • Step unlikely to satisfy Riyadh, which has called for full withdrawal

AL MUKALLA: Separatists from Yemen's Southern Transitional Council said on Thursday that Saudi-aligned government forces would enter territories seized by the UAE-backed group, in a step that appeared unlikely to satisfy Riyadh after it repeatedly demanded their full withdrawal.

A surprise offensive by the STC, in which the separatists took control of resource-rich Hadramawt and Mahra provinces last month, has brought the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, officially allies in Yemen, to a point of unprecedented tension.

On Tuesday, the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen struck what it said was a shipment of Emirati weapons in the port of Mukalla destined for the separatists, a claim Abu Dhabi has denied, and demanded that STC forces withdraw from the newly captured territory.

In its statement on Thursday, the STC said it would continue to operate in the regions but had agreed to the deployment of the Riyadh-backed National Shield government force in the areas.

"Today, we launched an operation to integrate the southern National Shield forces so that they can assume the responsibilities and missions that fall to our armed forces," they announced.

The statement said a National Shield brigade would be deployed in "areas of the Hadramawt and Mahra governorates, as agreed".

But a source close to the Saudi government told *AFP* on Thursday that Saudi Arabia's security needs would only be met if the STC "move out of Hadramawt and Mahra".

The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the redeployment of government forces did not go far enough. "We have to wait and see what is carried out on the ground," they added.

Another source close to the Saudi military said the Riyadh-led coalition was closely following events on the ground and making its own assessment.

The STC later dismissed criticism of the deal, saying that the government forces that would enter their areas would be predominantly made up of southerners who had been funded and supervised by Saudi Arabia.

"Their deployment along the Saudi border nullifies any argument used by those lying in wait to incite Saudi Arabia," STC spokesman Anwar Al Tamimi told *AFP*.

Saudi Arabia, the main backer of the Yemeni government, had repeatedly urged the STC to withdraw from recently conquered territories, particularly areas along its southern border, and earlier conducted airstrikes against its positions.

Following the strikes on Tuesday, the UAE's defence ministry said it would withdraw its last remaining troops in Yemen after Saudi Arabia imposed a 24-hour deadline for their removal.

The Yemeni government, of which the STC is a part, comprises a fractious coalition of groups united by their opposition to the Houthis who seized the capital Sanaa in 2014, and subsequently, large parts of northern Yemen.

The STC's December advance raised the possibility of that South Yemen, a separate state from 1967 to 1990, might declare independence, while dealing a hammer blow to slow-moving peace negotiations with the Houthi rebels.

Emirati troops arrived in Yemen as part of the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis, who had forced the government from the capital Sanaa in 2014 and seized much of the country.—AFP

Shehbaz for exploring new oil, gas fields to cut imports

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting on matters related to the Petroleum Division and directed that exploration of new oil and gas resources be prioritised to conserve valuable foreign exchange spent on petroleum imports.

The premier emphasised that looking into domestic energy resources was critical for national economic stability.

He also ordered the digitisation of the entire supply chain for the import and domestic utilisation of oil and gas on a priority basis.

"With the digitisation of the oil and gas supply chain, smuggling of these products will be effectively curbed, which will ultimately benefit the national exchequer," the prime minister noted.

The meeting was informed that the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) had discovered significant new oil and gas reservoirs in the Nashpa Block area of Kohat district.

The newly discovered reserves are expected to yield around 4,100 barrels of oil per day.

The meeting was also informed that domestic consumers experienced improved gas pressure during the current winter season against last year.

Officials said work on RLNG connections had been stepped up, with a target of providing 350,000 new connections by June 2026.

The meeting was further told that pipelines for the Sheva and Batani gas fields had been commissioned, while work on the pipeline from the Kot Palak gas field was underway.

Chairing a separate meeting on economic reforms, the PM highlighted that implementation of the government's economic governance policies was inevitable. He sought proposals from all relevant ministries suggesting practical measures and a comprehensive strategy involving minimal duration.—APP

Trump pulls National Guard from three cities

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump is withdrawing National Guard troops from Chicago, Los Angeles and Portland, following a series of legal setbacks over his military deployments in US cities.

The Republican had sent troops into several cities run by Democrats during his first year back in power, in what he called a crackdown on illegal immigration and crime.

Local leaders slammed the moves as authoritarian overreach and launched a string of successful legal challenges, with the US Supreme Court last week blocking the Chicago deployment.

"We are removing the National Guard from Chicago, Los Angeles, and Portland, despite the fact that CRIME has been greatly reduced by having these great Patriots in those cities, and ONLY by that fact," Trump said on his Truth Social network on Wednesday.

In the message on New Year's Eve, Trump said the three cities "were GONE if it weren't for the Federal Government stepping in". "We will come back, perhaps in a much different and stronger form, when crime begins to soar again — Only a question of time!" Trump added.

Trump's deployments of National Guard troops have been a centerpiece of his hardline policies on immigration and crime since returning to the White House in January.

He has also sent the National Guard into the capital Washington and to Memphis, Tennessee, and threatened to send them to San Francisco.

But the Trump administration had already begun to pull some troops from Chicago, Los Angeles and Portland in recent weeks as court judgments went against it.

"He lost in court when Illinois stood up against his attempt to militarise American cities with the National Guard. Now Trump is forced to stand down," Illinois Governor JB Pritzker said on X.

Los Angeles became the first city to have troops on the streets in June when Trump went over the heads of local Democratic leaders to order 4,000 National Guard reservists to put down protests over immigration raids.

Those local leaders said the relatively minor protests, which affected only a few blocks in America's second largest metropolis, could easily be handled by city, county and state law enforcement.

On December 10, a federal judge ordered Trump's administration to end the Los Angeles deployment and return control of the soldiers to California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom.

Most had already been demobilised, with the US military saying 100 Guard troops remained deployed at the time.

Hours before Trump's announcement, Newsom said the administration had formally stopped opposing the federal court's ruling on the troops. An appellate court made it official, ruling that the lower court's order to return control should move forward.

"This admission by Trump and his occult cabinet members means this illegal intimidation tactic will finally come to an end," Newsom, seen as a likely Democratic contender for the presidency in 2028, said on X.—AFP

40 killed by fire at New Year's party in Swiss resort

CRANS MONTANA: Around 40 people were killed and over 100 injured when a fire ripped through a crowded bar in the luxury Swiss ski resort town of Crans-Montana as young revellers rang in the new year, police said on Thursday.

Horrified bystanders described "panic" as people tried to break through the windows of the bar to escape, and others, covered in burns, poured into the street.

Police, firefighters and rescuers rushed to the popular resort, which is set to host the Ski World Cup from January 30, after the fire broke out in the early hours of New Year's Day.

Frederic Gisler, police commander in the Wallis canton in southwestern Switzerland, told reporters that authorities had counted "around 40 people who have died and around 115 injured, most of them seriously".

Guy Parmelin, who took over the Swiss presidency on Thursday, told reporters the fire was "one of the worst tragedies that our country has experienced".

Alexis Laguerre, an 18-year-old, had been walking with a group of friends past the Le Constellation bar, a popular spot with young people and tourists, when they noticed smoke and flames emerging from the venue and called the police. "I am in shock," Laguerre told Swiss public broadcaster *RTS*. "People were running through the flames. People were using chairs to try to break the windows."

Two young French women, Emma and Albane, told French broadcaster *BFMTV* that they had been able to escape the "panic" in the bar shortly after the fire broke out. They said "birthday candles" placed on champagne bottles had got too close to the ceiling.

"Seconds later, the entire ceiling was burning," one of them told the broadcaster, estimating that there were around 200 people in the venue at the time, mainly aged between 15 and 20.

Authorities said they were still investigating the causes of the fire, which erupted shortly before 1:30am (0030 GMT), but said they did not believe it had been caused by an "attack".

RESCUERS work at the site of an explosion that ripped through a bar in the luxury Alpine ski resort town of Crans Montana.—AFP

The emergency unit at the main hospital in the Wallis was full, with the injured being transported to various hospitals across Switzerland.

More than a dozen victims had been transported to the Zurich University Hospital in northern Switzerland, while at least 22 people suffering from serious burns had been taken to the main hospital in Lausanne, and six had been taken to Geneva, Switzerland's *Keystone-ATS* news agency reported.—AFP

Fresh clashes claim six lives amid Iran cost-of-living protests

• One security official among the dead • State media blames 'rioters', rights group accuses security forces • President Pezeshkian cites 'legitimate demands' regarding livelihood; Iran currency has lost over one-third of its value against dollar as Western sanctions hammer the economy

TEHRAN: Protesters and security forces clashed in western Iran on Thursday, leaving six people dead in the first fatal violence since cost-of-living demonstrations erupted earlier this week.

The unrest, triggered by soaring inflation and a collapsing currency, has spread from the capital to other major cities.

The semi-official *Fars* news agency reported that two civilians were killed in Lordegan, following confrontations with security services. Meanwhile, state media confirmed that a member of the Basij paramilitary force was killed overnight in the city of Kouhdasht.

The violence marks a significant escalation in the demonstrations that began on Sunday, when shopkeepers in Tehran went on strike to protest economic stagnation and high prices.

By Tuesday, students from at least 10 universities had joined the movement, which has since expanded to include closing major bazaars across the country.

"Some protesters began throwing stones at the city's administrative buildings, including the provincial governor's office, the mosque, the Martyrs' Foundation, the town hall and banks," *Fars* reported regarding the situation in Lordegan.

The agency stated that police responded with tear gas after the buildings were "severely damaged" and arrested several people described as "ringleaders".

In Kouhdasht, state television cited Said Pourali, the deputy governor of Lorestan Province, reporting the death of a 21-year-old member of the Basij. The channel said the man was killed "by rioters while defending public order".

Mr Pourali noted that "during the demonstrations in Kouhdasht, 13 police officers and Basij members were injured by stone throwing".

However, accounts of the violence vary. The rights group Hengaw reported that security forces killed and wounded several people in Lordegan.

Regarding the death in Kouhdasht, the Revolutionary Guards accused demonstrators of taking advantage of the protests.

Contrarily, Hengaw identified the deceased as Amirhossam Khodayari Fard and alleged he was a protester killed by security forces.

Hengaw also reported that a protester was shot dead on Wednesday in Isfahan province in central Iran. Reuters could not immediately verify these reports.

Protests also took place on Thursday in Marvdasht in the southern Fars province, the activist news site *HRANA* reported.

Hengsaw said Wednesday's events included demonstrations and detentions across Kermanshah, Khuzestan, and Hamedan.

The unrest comes at a critical moment for Iran's clerical rulers.

The economy has been hammered by Western sanctions and a currency that has lost more than a third of its value against the US dollar over the past year.

Inflation reached 52 per cent year-over-year in December, according to the Statistical Centre of Iran.

The country is also recovering from regional tensions that led to a 12-day air war in June, during which Israeli and US airstrikes targeted the country's nuclear infrastructure and military leadership.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian sought to calm tensions on Thursday, acknowledging the protesters' "legitimate demands" and calling on the government to improve the economic situation.

"From an Islamic perspective ... if we do not resolve the issue of people's livelihoods, we will end up in hell," Pezeshkian said at an event broadcast on state television.

Despite the conciliatory tone, authorities promised to take a "firm" stance against disorder. Iran's prosecutor general warned on Wednesday that while peaceful economic protests were legitimate, any attempt to create insecurity would be met with a "decisive response".

"Any attempt to turn economic protests into a tool of insecurity, destruction of public property, or implementation of externally designed scenarios will inevitably be met with a legal, proportionate and decisive response," the prosecutor said.

Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani announced on Thursday that authorities would hold a direct dialogue with representatives of trade unions and merchants, though she did not provide further details.

The current demonstrations remain smaller than the nationwide uprising in 2022, which was triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code. That wave of anger left several hundred people dead.

Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday evening the arrest of seven people allegedly affiliated with "groups hostile to the Islamic Republic based in the United States and Europe," claiming they were "tasked with turning the demonstrations into violence".

Local media coverage has been mixed, with some outlets highlighting economic hardships while others focus on incidents caused by "troublemakers".—Agencies

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